



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

TWO MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO TRANSPORTING ILLEGAL ALIENS

Smugglers held Guatemalan female hostage

West Palm—Two Mexican nationals arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents pleaded guilty in federal court Wednesday for alien smuggling.

Marcos Daniel Jiménez, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Keith Perniciaro, Acting Special Agent-In-Charge, ICE and Rick Lincoln, Chief of the Lantana Police Department announced that Rogino Sanchez, 25, citizen of Mexico and Ricardo Jose Contreras, 33, citizen of Mexico, pleaded guilty on June 8, 2005 to one (1) count of conspiring to transport illegal aliens within the United States for profit and one (1) count of transporting an illegal alien within the United States for profit. The plea hearings were held before United States District Judge Donald M. Middlebrooks in Miami, Florida. The men face a maximum of ten (10) years imprisonment on each count.

According to the initial complaint filed in this matter, Sanchez and Contreras picked up an illegal alien, an 18- year-old Guatemalan female, in Arizona and transported her to Alabama and then Florida. When they arrived in Florida to deliver the illegal alien to Palm Beach County, Florida, Sanchez and Contreras met with the individual's father to collect final payment of \$2,500 for the transportation.

Both men were arrested on March 29, 2005, after they refused to turn over the female to her family in Palm Beach County, Florida, when her father failed to come up with the full amount owed (\$2,500) for the smuggling. An initial payment of \$1,456 had been previously wired to Mexico via Western Union, followed by two additional payments of \$700 and \$600 sent to Mesa, Arizona.

"We are going after the trafficking networks that have no regard for human life," said Keith Perniciaro. "We will continue our investigative efforts in disrupting alien smuggling organizations whose only goal is to profit at the expense of others."

Sentencing is scheduled for Aug. 17, 2005, at 4:00 p.m. in Miami, Florida.

Mr. Jiménez commended the investigative efforts of ICE and the Lantana Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Janice Le Clainche, of the West Palm Beach Office.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.